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AN

A D D R E S S

TO THE

PEOPLE OF IRELAND,

ON THE

Present Situation of Public Affairs.

Hæ tibi erunt artes; pacisque imponere morem,

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1798.



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1857

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AN ADDRESS,

&c.

MEN OF IRELAND!

YOU are no strangers to the traitorous efforts which have long been made in both kingdoms, by a few daring and desperate individuals, to excite a spirit of disaffection among the people, for the purpose of facilitating the designs of the French, by introducing into these happy islands that system of anarchy and plunder, which, in disorganizing society, and desolating France, has annihilated the trade, the industry, and the morals of her inhabitants.

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For some time past these wicked attempts have been prosecuted with a considerable degree of secrecy ; but of late, the successes of the enemy, and the lenity of Government, have encouraged the conspirators to a more open avowal of their intentions ; and the most criminal designs are proved to be entertained against the laws, the liberties, and the religion of your country.

At this important period therefore, when you are threatened with invasion by a barbarous and unrelenting enemy, it becomes you to display an energy commensurate to the magnitude of the occasion ; not merely by repressing those daring parricides who seek to overthrow their country, but by shewing to the enemy, that as you are a free, so you are a united people ; and that whatever differences may exist among you upon lesser subjects,—yet that in the great cause of public liberty ; in the sacred maintenance of the



the Imperial Sovereignty of Ireland ; in the preservation of the ancient and happy form of constitution of these realms ; you are all united, and ready to perish, in preference to submitting to the ignominious yoke of an atheistical invader.

When therefore, O Men of Ireland ! your Parliament is assembled for the purpose of adopting such measures as may become this awful and perilous crisis, rally round the temple of your laws, and sacrifice to the urgency of the occasion, every feeling disconnected with the immediate happiness and safety of your country ! Bury those degrading animosities which have too long prevailed among you. Adjourn to a calmer moment the frivolities of a reform in Parliament, and other little abstract notions, which are only now artfully pressed upon your attention for the sake of weakening you before the enemy ; and prove, by a coa-

lition of strength and opinion, uniting in one common league of resistance, that you have not departed from the invincible spirit and gallantry of your ancestors ; but that, as it is your pride to be free, it is equally your glory to be great. By so doing, the success of your efforts will be proportioned to the wisdom of your conduct ; and the blessings of peace will ultimately be restored to you upon terms which are not incompatible with the national interest, and dignity of both kingdoms.

I know, Men of Ireland, that this language will not be approved of by those who endeavour to divide you to obtain their ends ; and who strive, by inflaming the passions of the people, to hurry them into all the guilty excesses of popular phrensy, with the view of extorting from the fears of their country, those concessions which ought only to flow from the purer streams of her judgment, and
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her justice. But to the Patriot who loves his country, to the Citizen who feels it to be his first duty to watch over her safety, it will be congenial to his feelings, because it is in unison with his wishes :—it is only to the Traitor, and the Demagogue, that such language can be repugnant, as inimical to their designs. I trust, however, you will all be united to frustrate these ; and that it will appear you are deeply penetrated with the necessity of first subduing the enemy, before you permit your minds to be enfeebled by the idle consideration of abstract questions of dubious and remote policy, when your attention should alone be directed to the means of averting the dangers with which you are threatened, from foreign invasion, and internal conspiracy.

I mean not, Men of Ireland, to deny, that able and distinguished persons in both kingdoms have contended for the necessity

of a reform in Parliament; and the people have been led to expect it, from the vehemence with which their orators have urged it to be necessary. Far be it from me to impeach the rectitude of their intentions; but without encountering the principle of such a measure, or commenting on the policy of their conduct, I shall content myself with remarking, that every wise and loyal man will at least agree, that this is not the moment for investigating either. Our present object is to preserve the constitution, and maintain the independence of our country: any alteration in our ~~system~~ of representation growing out of the speculative opinions of individuals, and which, in the attempt to introduce it, may occasion disorder, is not to be made at a season of public difficulty and danger: it ought to be calmly discussed, deliberately weighed, and, if necessary, cautiously tried at a period of profound tranquillity, when, if unfortunately it should disturb
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the peace of the country, our enemy may not be prepared to take advantage of those dissensions it may excite, for the purpose of converting them to his own benefit, at the expence of our folly. To make this subject (which, whenever seriously agitated, must produce all the shock of jarring interests and discordant opinions) a stalking-horse of discontent for the people at this critical juncture, is in fact only to call off their attention from the more important consideration of the deeper national interests at stake, in the arduous contest in which they are engaged, for the purpose of encouraging the enemy to invade us, by leading him to believe we are disunited among ourselves. No temperate and prudent man therefore, who really wishes well to either kingdom, will talk of reforming the constitution at this period of time, when we are in a situation next to arms; but feeling the imperious necessity of unanimity throughout the land,

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he will say, Let all our struggles now be directed to defeating the enemy, and then we may turn our attention to improvement among ourselves.

This, Men of Ireland, will be the language of those who are really the friends of the people, and of peace. Instead of preaching to you of your *rights*, they will talk to you of your *duties*; and rank among the foremost the love of your country, and obedience to her laws: instead of stimulating you, like the midnight whisperer, to sedition and revolt, they will fortify your allegiance by the purity of precept, and the loyalty of example. What are theoretical grievances, when contrasted with the practical comforts of your real situation? Instead of arraigning your Parliamentary system as inadequate to its purpose, because it is not in unison with the ravings of a *Paine*, but professes to make property the basis of representation,

presentation, see it evidently promoting the great ends of its institution, the welfare of the people, by various beneficial laws actively operating upon the industry and happiness of the nation at large : look at thirty years of rapid improvement growing out of your alleged state of decayed representation. Behold, Ireland indebted to the imputed rotten part of her constitution, for the limitation of the duration of Parliament, the restriction of the Pension List, and the repeal of Poyning's Law*. Call to recollection how often your Parliaments have struggled, with gradual and successful zeal, to preserve a just balance between the rights of the People and the prerogative of the Crown. What are the Treasury, Civil List, Responsibility, and Free Trade Bills, but so many

* It is an incontestible fact, that the Boroughs of Ireland were foremost in the struggle to obtain for her all those advantages of late in which she prides herself most.

proofs to adduce in evidence of the patriotic vigilance of your representatives? And what is the independence of the Judges, but the rampart they have erected to protect public liberty, by the impartial administration of justice it ensures? Pause on these several checks upon the Crown—on these valuable concessions acquired for the nation by your Parliaments—on the general advantage arising to the people from the Executive and the Legislative branches of the Constitution, thus co-operating to restrain each other; and then consider whether benefits like these, growing out of such a system, with all its attributed imperfections, are to be weighed at this eventful crisis, against the plausible theories of ingenious minds, or the lighter speculations of superficial politicians? No! my fellow-citizens, venerate ancient institutions; approach them with a pious awe; and touch them with a cautious, and a trembling hand. Remember, they have the sanctity
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of time to excite your reverence. What the wisdom of our ancestors has devised, and the experience of ages has confirmed, is not to be made the sport of levity and rashness, lest, in shaking the foundations of our happiness, we subvert the edifice of our glory. He must be a wise man who can look through the progress of time, and trace the operations of change in those forms of government to which a people have been long inured. Never was a more terrible lesson to instruct us, than the tragical revolution in France. Let us wisely apply it, as the means of our own preservation; by opposing, to the giddy contagion of dazzling but deceptive systems, a just and sober reverence for the superior excellencies of our own established Constitution. In this way alone can its moral contribute to our advantage.

To you, Men of Ireland, the scene is different.

ferent. In the rising prosperity of your country, in the mildness of your laws, the increase of your trade, the improvement of your manufactures, and the growing riches of your kingdom, you have the happiest proofs of national felicity ; and the most irrefragable testimony of a just attention on the part of your rulers to realize the end of government, by making the happiness of the subject the object of their solicitude. Turn then from the traitors who would betray you, from the demagogues who would deceive you ; and, relying upon the Constitution you already possess as a more solid security for the continuance of your prosperity than any which can be tendered to you by the spurious philosophers of the day, direct your attention only to the immediate situation of your country, threatened with invasion by a numerous and necessitous people, whose extraordinary exertions are solely the effect of a despair excited by the misery of
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their own internal state, and the enormity of their crimes, resulting from a violation of every moral tie by which society has hitherto been held together.

It is not to their superior bravery we are to ascribe the successes they have obtained ; but to the unexampled instance of their forcing into action every power of wealth, population, and revenue, beyond the ordinary bounds of policy and justice, by means the most flagitious that ever the dark page of tyranny recorded, to awaken the resentment of indignant man. With them every thing has been sacrificed to military enterprise. Let this reflection unite men of all religious persuasions against the common enemy of every sect professing to believe in the doctrines of Christianity. It is not the Catholic, it is not the Protestant, in the event of their success, that would be favoured. Each in his turn would be the victim of their ferocity ; whilst

whilst the plunder of all, and the subversion of the altars of both, would alone be the impious objects of their predatory fury. A sense of common danger therefore should be the bond of general union.

In vain will it be urged,—You have little to apprehend; that France, emancipated herself, seeks only to liberate other nations. What have been the effects of her fraternizing system in those countries into which she has penetrated by her principles, or her arms? Have grievances been redressed? Have the laws been maintained? Has property been protected? Has religion been revered? Look at the universal wreck of each, in every province added to her dominion. Enormous contributions of money extorted from the poor as well as the rich, to the utter ruin of whole cities; desolation poured into the heart of Germany, and Italy; all the ferocious days of Attila revived;

vived ; hostages torn away from their families, to linger in the fetters of captivity, until redeemed by the ruin of their relatives ; provisions and property alike in requisition ; with innocence and chastity a prey to the brutal excesses of a licentious soldiery ! These are among the many proofs they have exhibited of the moderation of their conduct, and the philanthropy of their views, in forcing upon the vanquished the poverty and ruin they have entailed upon themselves. Behold the peaceful peasantry of Germany and Italy, goaded by despair, rising up in mass to hurl their chains at their oppressors ! Survey the armies of Jourdan, Moreau, and Buonaparte, murdering these innocent people, driving off their cattle, destroying their villages, violating their women, and heaping upon their miserable families every wrong which inventive cruelty can inflict ! See them, in other places, sparing the injured and indus-

trious farmer, only to sacrifice him to the fire or the sword of the enemy, by forcing him to work at their entrenchments; or, by driving him with the bayonet, to drag their convoys, baggage, or artillery, to the field! Contemplate these various scenes of savage and atrocious tyranny, and then say, Where is the virtue, the honour, the humanity, of these lofty preachers of the rights of men? Every where a violation of principle, a dereliction of feeling, a contempt of justice, an invasion of property! These are the mournful footsteps they have imprinted in the countries they have ravaged, traced in the tears, the poverty, and the wretchedness of the vanquished!

But what is the internal situation of France itself? The parent no longer sends his offspring to the field animated with the tale of liberty. My son, says he, for what are we contending? We have destroyed the har-

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mony of order, to establish the reign of anarchy ; we have trampled upon our laws, to substitute with impunity the violation of every moral principle ; and we have murdered our king, to raise up the empire of his assassins ! Our temples have been destroyed ; our venerable pastors have been butchered ; the purer doctrines of our faith have been supplanted by a sacrilegious homage to the manes of a *Marat* ; and the statues of our saints have been succeeded by the busts of our oppressors. Is this the liberty we were promised, when, obedient to the voice of our country, we rushed to establish her reign ? Or, is it a tyranny with which we are smitten, as a scourge for the measure of our crimes ? Behold confidence destroyed ; private vengeance usurping the name of public justice ; terror darkening the land ; civil war convulsing us within, and foreign enemies distressing us without ; whilst famine, howling through our streets, echoes but the

groans of our distracted country ! View this ; and trace, in the complication of our miseries, the awful chastenings of an offended Deity !

Yes, Men of Ireland ! these will be the sentiments of every reflecting parent to whom the tyranny of requisition yet has left a son ; and who, while standing upon the smoking ruins of his country, and surveying the wide-spreading embers of desolation which surround him, will point them to him as a dreadful beacon to forewarn him from the dangerous illusions of enthusiasm, and the fatal consequences resulting from a sudden and convulsive change in the moral and political conditions of society. Yet these are the people, thus stigmatized by crime and oppression, with whom you are invited to fraternize, and who idly imagine the difficulties of subduing you will be lightened by the differences which divide you, and a sentiment

timent of prepossession in their favour; as if it were possible, disowning your allegiance, that you can be blind to your interest, and relinquish the blessings of real liberty for the miseries of anarchy and servitude. But can it be supposed that, in any situation, you will submit to be treated as a conquered people? Above all, will you bend to an enemy you have so often despised, and who, in the endeavour to subdue you, will seek, like the Romans, by transplanting into your soil the poisonous root of his own institutions, to extirpate every vestige of your former happiness and renown, by the subversion of your laws, the degradation of your morals, and the destruction of your religion? In no situation, I trust, could the spirit of either kingdom endure so ignominious an idea. No, Men of Ireland! every misfortune is light compared with the humiliation of our country. It is only in the perilous conjuncture, and the trying occasion, that the ge-

nus of an independent nation asserts its superiority. To what have we hitherto been indebted for whatever of pre-eminence we enjoy over the enemy, but to the excellent nature of our government, which cherishes public industry by the stimulus of an inviolable security to property, and confers upon all the blessings of a real, visible, and practicable equality, by raising the humblest peasant above the arm of oppression, and ranking him on a level with the proudest Peer of the realm, when placed within the pale of the law? This is the only equality that can have a permanent duration in society, because it is derived from the rights, and not from the caprices, of men; and these have their limits in the law, which all may comprehend, and none can transgress. This is the equality which we have all the happiness to enjoy. How different from that chimerical equality, which springing out of anarchy, and dis-

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daining bounds, engendered the miseries
 which afflicted Greece, and all the horrors
 that have blackened France ! What gives to
 land its value, but the security of the tenure ?
 and what imparts solidity to the tenure, but
 the nature of the government under which
 it is held ? In France even now, where,
 comparatively, a less cruel system of ad-
 ministration prevails, landed property, of
 ancient and unforfeited title, is selling at
 three years and a half purchase. What is
 the reason of this extreme depreciation, but
 that the proprietors wish to emigrate from a
 soil in which there is neither security for
 persons or property ; and to shelter them-
 selves in some foreign land, where, far from
 the tumults and injustice of their country,
 they may live at least in peace, and raise
 their stifled prayers to heaven in gratitude
 for their escape ? In what climate does land
 bear any similar value to its price with us ?
 Where is the country whose wealth, whose

industry, whose commerce can be compared with that of Great Britain, and Ireland, in proportion to the extent of their territory and population? Or, where are the kingdoms, in which man, meaning well, anxious to be happy himself, and not to invade the peace of others, is more protected in his liberty, or cherished in his industry? Would these advantages, growing out of, and interwoven with, our Constitution, be left to us in the event of conquest? Or, would presumed grievances be remedied in the case of a successful invasion? Has the voice of the people been heard in Brabant? Have the laws of nations, and the sacred rights of neutrality, been respected in Tuscany, or Switzerland? Have the Dutch, in the pursuit of a fallacious freedom, been able to regain their real independence? Or have they, in the struggle to emerge from anarchy, been able to recover their commerce, or shake off their conquerors? In vain have they ungratefully

gratefully despoiled the descendant of the illustrious founder of their liberties; in vain has all their wealth been drained to satiate the rapacity of their invaders; in vain have they implored to be left to establish for themselves that form of government best suited to the habits and genius of the people; in vain have they entreated to be relieved from the presence and the burden of the armies of the Convention. Condemned to the humble mimicry of revolutionary forms, as well as principles, they exhibit the melancholy picture of a plundered and degraded people, to whom nothing is left but to share the fortunes and the miseries of their conquerors, by the adoption of their laws, their customs, their manners, and their crimes. The ends of the enemy would be defeated by leaving you in the possession of any of those means by which you might hope to obtain the recovery of your liberties; and it would be too late, when levelled to the low condition

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of a wretched province of France, for any party who had promoted his success by treasonable co-operation to reproach him with having deceived them, when all were reduced to the miserable state of a servile obedience to his will. To those, therefore, who mean Reform, their object would not be promoted; and to those who criminally seek to aggrandize themselves, their end would not be attained. The treason of the Traitor would early be despised by the conqueror; and the temporary consequence of the Demagogue would soon be succeeded by the permanent slavery of the individual. Every man would be crushed in the general ruin, whose character or talents might have an influence in redeeming the liberties of his country; while the musket and the guillotine (as in their new dominions) would alone be the iron sceptres to govern the people.

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Nor deem this, Men of Ireland, an exaggerated picture of the miseries that would await you. That dreadful system of private assassination, which, to the eternal disgrace of its sanguinary adherents, is already beginning to reproach you with its shame, may be considered as an awful earnest of the public massacres that would ensue, if these desperate and abandoned men, aloof from the restraints of conscience, were raised by commotion to situations above the immediate controul of power. In such a scene where would the virtues find their shelter? In the tumult of insurrection where is the protecting shield of public justice? In the tempest of the passions the cries of innocence are drowned. Sparta, Athens, Rome, like France, in these intemperate moments of national delirium, alternately sacrificed their most valuable citizens to their prejudices, and lamented them—when only on their tombs, or their statues, they could shed

shed the silent sorrows of repenting remorse!

All parties, therefore, to whom the real freedom and happiness of their country are dear, are equally interested in opposing an enemy, whose only object is to pillage and destroy. In the case of a generous adversary, the ignominy of subjection might be softened by a respect on the part of the conqueror for the laws, the property, and the religion of the vanquished. But here—the grave of civilization opens to entomb them all! It is not your statues, it is not your pictures they claim. It is the degradation of the national character they seek; it is the subversion of the British Constitution they demand. These two objects obtained, they would leave to you nothing but a desolated island, with the sad remembrance of your folly to aggravate the consciousness of your shame.

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Rouse, therefore, Men of Ireland, to the defence of your coasts ! The voice of your country calls upon you in cheering accents to vindicate her rights ; and bids you firmly trust, while true to yourselves, that the attempt to subdue you will be as impotent as the efforts of Philip the Second to subjugate England ! A brave and martial people, animated with the love of independence, and united in the cause of liberty, are not to be subdued by the cohorts of anarchists ! Let them invade you when they will, if they can elude the vigilance of the fleets of England ; the attempt, generated in desperation, will only terminate in their dismay. Temporary confusion and momentary distress they may occasion ; but permanent victory they can never obtain. Every ditch will be a fortification they must carry, every breast will be a rampart they must storm, every hamlet will pour forth its little population to multiply their difficulties ; and the

the final destruction of their armies (if they should presume to land) will ultimately avenge the fall of those martyrs who may have died in the defence of their country. No, Men of Ireland! Victory never can be theirs, whilst liberty and virtue are yours! Nothing can subdue you but **INTERNAL DISSENSION!** If you suffer this hydra to invade you, you will only add to the melancholy instances already recorded in history, and perish, like other states, more by the wounds of civil discord, than from the superior courage of an invading enemy. But I trust you will keep this many-headed monster, like the enemy, from your doors, and perpetuate, by the harmony and energy of your conduct, the duration of your independence to the remotest period of time.

These, Men of Ireland, are the animating hopes which, detached from foreign assistance, belong to your local situation and character.

rafter. But, when you consider the protection you are entitled to claim, and will assuredly receive, from your sister country, and how many of her gallant sons will hasten to your shores in the event of the enemy carrying his threats into execution, it fortifies the confidence of success, by strengthening it with the assurance of victory. The maritime force of England (still increasing) has already risen to an unparalleled pitch of prosperity; while the navies of the French Republic, and of our other enemies, are nearly annihilated. The insular strength and wealth of Great Britain and Ireland are beyond the example of any former period; whereas the resources and public credit of France are at the lowest ebb, her trade destroyed, and national bankruptcy prevailing in every part of her dominions. These are the enviable consequences resulting to us from enjoying, in the highest degree, the security of liberty and property;

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and an increasing commerce, even under all the interruptions inseparable from a state of warfare, is the glorious effect of both.

Such is our situation. To the French belongs every species of distress which can grow out of national crimes, whilst their misery, augmenting by the universal failure of their credit, proportionably contributes to accelerate the downfall of their empire.

In comparing therefore the means of both, as adapted to the object which each have in view, you will arrive at a result as consolatory to your hopes as it must be dispiriting to the enemy who is seeking to subdue you. On the one side you have to place the powerful resources of a great and well-regulated nation against the desperate means of an exhausted and licentious empire; and on the other you have to weigh a government founded in the temperate dominion of the people,

people, against a tyranny supported by the grinding despotism of the rabble. The alternative is alone what interest dictates—To unite in the defence of your country, by zealously co-operating to support that happy form of constitution under which you have so long flourished, and to which your children are entitled to look, as the best inheritance you can bequeath to them. Was this master-piece of human wisdom the work of a day, like the shallow systems of modern innovators? No; it is the gradual and admirable result of a series of principles growing out of time, which, uniting in harmony together, have ultimately contributed to all our greatness, by finally sheltering us from those storms to which the usurpation of Princes, and the tyranny of Factions, alternately exposed both kingdoms in the progress of its structure. Oppose to this a bleeding empire struggling between the silence of laws and the absence of morals;

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rals ; a prey to the agitations of revolutionary principles ; the sport of factions ; and the theatre of crimes ! the wounds of anarchy rankling in her side ; the pillars of society cast around her ; and the blood of her children flowing on her soil ! Men of Ireland, I give you the picture ; make the application. Thus may you be preserved from the miseries I have portrayed !

Let me therefore exhort you by the blessings of civil liberty, by the virtues of the national character, by all the enjoyments which constitute your happiness and security ; bury your animosities in the most elevated sentiments of attachment to your country. Let the crisis of danger be the moment of unanimity. Emulate the bright examples of your ancestry, by a noble devotion to the public cause ; and shew, that with virtue to enjoy, you have spirit to defend, the edifice they erected to dignify
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your condition ! Remember, into your hands they have committed, as a sacred legacy to maintain, the accumulated glory of ages ! Shew by the magnanimity of your conduct, in preserving it from decay, that you are worthy of being the depositaries of so venerable and illustrious a trust ! Already the fleeting events of the age are hastening to the judgment of posterity. Be it your destiny to present the historian at her bar, decorated with the annals of your fame, to inscribe upon the imperial page of nations the unperishable tribute of her applause. And if, in the decadence of empires, it should be the fate of other kingdoms to perish by the volcanic force of that moral earthquake which yet convulses Europe to its centre, with you at least may it meet its bounds, in the loyalty and good sense of the people ; and Ireland, like England, preserved from the wreck, still continue to be the asylum of the unfortunate, the refuge of the sciences,

sciences, and the emporium of commerce and the arts! So, in the event of invasion, may you exhibit to distant ages the happy spectacle of a united people; and your children, like yourselves, be indebted for the preservation of their liberties, next to the protection of Providence, to the wisdom of their laws, and the spirit of their ancestors!



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